THE ROLE OF DENTAL PROFESSIONALS IN IDENTIFYING HYPERTENSION AND DIABETES MELLITUS IN ELDERLY PATIENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study underscores the critical role dental professionals can play in the early identification and management of hypertension and diabetes mellitus among elderly patients in Malaysia. Both conditions, prevalent in the elderly population, are often undiagnosed and poorly managed, exacerbating the public health burden. The study revealed that 46% of elderly dental patients had known hypertension, and 16% presented with undiagnosed elevated blood pressure during routine dental visits. Similarly, 29.3% had known diabetes mellitus, while 2% exhibited abnormal blood glucose levels despite having no prior diabetes diagnosis. These findings highlight the importance of integrating basic health assessments, such as blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, into dental care settings. Early identification of these conditions during routine dental visits can provide an opportunity for timely intervention, preventing complications and improving patient outcomes. The study also proposed a clinical algorithm to guide dental practitioners in managing patients with hypertension and diabetes based on their readings. This approach positions dental professionals as key stakeholders in Malaysia's healthcare system, offering a valuable entry point for elderly patients who may not regularly access medical care.

By adopting a standardized protocol for managing hypertension and diabetes in dental settings, the healthcare system could see a reduction in undiagnosed cases, ultimately improving the quality of care for elderly patients and alleviating the burden of these chronic conditions.

Keywords: Elderly, Hypertension, Diabetes Mellitus, Dental.